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APPLICATION FOR LETTERS PATENT

**Worldwide Television Tuning System With Country  
Code Based Tuning**

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## **TECHNICAL FIELD**

This invention relates to tuning systems for broadcast television signals. More particularly, this invention relates to worldwide tuning systems that are configurable to various broadcast television standards and channel frequencies used throughout the world.

## **BACKGROUND**

Analog video standards for broadcast television differ from country to country. The broadcast television standard used here in the United States, for example, is different than the broadcast standard used in France. Conventional standards include multiple versions of NTSC (National Television Standards Committee), multiple versions of PAL (Phase Alternate Line), and multiple versions of SECAM (Sequential Couleur Avec Memoire).

Broadcast frequencies also change from country to country. Each country is assigned a range of frequencies to allot to its domestic television broadcast service. An international governing body known as the "International Telecommunications Union" or "ITU" governs the allocation of broadcast frequencies among the various countries.

The country-by-country discrepancies among broadcast standards and channel frequencies pose a problem for television manufacturers. Since each country employs a particular standard and operates within a particular range of frequencies, manufacturers must tailor their televisions to the country into which they are to be sold. Traditionally, the manufacturers have hardwired the televisions during manufacturing to comply with the standard and frequency requirements of the destination country.

Fig. 1 shows the hardware components of a broadcast television 20. It includes a tuner 22, a crossbar 24, a video decoder 26, a display 28, and speaker(s) 30. The tuner 22 tunes to a particular channel frequency to receive a broadcast television signal, which carries both video and audio data. The tuner 22 separates an analog video signal from an analog audio signal. The crossbar 24 routes the analog video signal to the video decoder 26, which converts the analog video signal to digital video data used to drive the display 28. The crossbar 24 also routes the analog audio signal to the speaker(s) or other audio components 30. It is noted that Fig. 1 represents a more modern television, which has digital capabilities. In older televisions, the crossbar 24 routes the analog video signal directly to the display 28 for depiction.

Under conventional manufacturing techniques, televisions used in different countries have different tuners 22 and video decoders 26. Televisions shipped in the United States are equipped with tuners and video decoders compatible with the U.S. broadcast standards and frequencies, whereas televisions shipped to other countries are equipped with different tuners and video decoders that are compatible with their broadcast standards and frequencies.

Country-based customization is inefficient because the manufacturer must make several versions of a product. In addition to broadcast standards and frequencies, the manufacturer might also have to contend with other regional differences, such specialized audio decoders for a particular market, or variations in picture tubes (e.g., 525 v. 625 line operation). The customization plays havoc with inventories because an overabundance of televisions for one country may not be cross-sold into another country where demand is strong.

1 To partially address this problem, manufacturers began using tuners and  
2 decoders that support multiple standards and frequencies. With this improvement,  
3 manufacturers are able to mass-produce one version of the television using the  
4 same components regardless of the destination country. Prior to shipping, the  
5 manufacturers program the tuner and decoder at the factory to a desired television  
6 standard and frequency range for the destination country.

7 While this is an improvement, it is not ideal. Video standards employed  
8 within a country may change. A country might decide to reallocate the broadcast  
9 frequencies, or perhaps adopt a different television standard, for political,  
10 administrative, or technical reasons. Televisions programmed at the factory are  
11 not capable of accommodating these changes. Accordingly, there is a need to  
12 design a television tuning system that may be upgraded in the field.

13 Another problem concerns portability. In the past, televisions sold into one  
14 country would typically reside in that country for the life of the product. It was  
15 less common for people to transport their televisions to different countries, unless  
16 they were permanently moving.

17 Today, as television tuner hardware decreases in size and continues to fall  
18 in component cost, it can be incorporated into portable computing devices, such as  
19 laptop computers. Given the portable nature of these computing devices, it is very  
20 likely that they will be used in numerous different locations throughout the world  
21 that employ different television standards and channel frequencies. Thus, there is  
22 a need for a worldwide television tuning system that is reconfigurable in the field  
23 to adapt to different television standards and channel frequencies.  
24  
25

## SUMMARY

This invention concerns a worldwide tuning system that may be implemented in televisions, computing devices, or other television broadcast receiving units. The worldwide tuning system is configurable to the television standards and channel frequencies of multiple different countries, and is reconfigurable in the event any of these parameters change. As a result, the worldwide tuning system may be transported to different countries and reconfigured to local television broadcasts. Additionally, the worldwide tuning system is upgradable in the field to accommodate any changes in television standards and channel frequencies used in various countries.

The worldwide tuning system is configurable based on a country's ITU long-distance country code. The tuning system maintains a country code table listing a plurality of countries according to their ITU codes. For instance, the United States has an ITU code of 1 and France has an ITU code of 33. The tuning system also maintains multiple channel-to-frequency mapping tables that provide television standards and correlate channel numbers to corresponding frequencies for associated countries in the country table. The country table indexes the channel-to-frequency mapping tables.

During configuration, a user or application selects a particular country by passing in the ITU code. The tuning system uses the ITU code to locate an entry for that country in the country code table. The table entry contains an index to an associated channel-to-frequency mapping table for the selected country. The tuning system then loads and saves the channel-to-frequency mapping table for subsequent use until a new and different ITU code is passed in. The tuning system

1 utilizes the television standard listed in the channel-to-frequency mapping table for  
2 decoding broadcast television signals in the selected country.

3 During tuning, the user or application enters a particular channel number.  
4 The tuning system uses the channel number to lookup a corresponding television  
5 frequency in the channel-to-frequency table. The tuning system then tunes to the  
6 television frequency.

7 In one implementation, the television tuning system is configured as a  
8 combination hardware/software architecture. The hardware components include  
9 tuner circuitry to tune to various television frequencies carrying television video  
10 signals and video decoder circuitry coupled to receive a television video signal  
11 from the tuner circuitry and to convert the television video signal to digital video  
12 data. A software layer overlying the hardware layer includes a tuner module  
13 coupled to adjust the tuner circuitry to a particular television frequency and a  
14 video decoder module to decode the digital video data according to a particular  
15 video standard.

16 The tuner module implements the country code table and the multiple  
17 channel-to-frequency mapping tables. The tuner module is implemented as a  
18 replaceable dynamic linked library (DLL). The tuner module supports an  
19 application program interface (API) to expose the DLL's functionality to an  
20 application program. In the event changes are made to broadcast television  
21 standards and channel frequencies within one or more countries, and as new  
22 countries are created or old countries cease to exist, a new tuner DLL can be  
23 downloaded and used to replace the out-of-date DLL without affecting operation  
24 of the tuning system.  
25

1 The tuner module selects a channel-to-frequency mapping table based upon  
2 input of a particular country and outputs a video standard to the video decoder for  
3 use in decoding the digital video data. The tuner module selects a television  
4 frequency from the selected channel-to-frequency mapping table based upon input  
5 of a corresponding channel and outputs the selected television frequency to the  
6 tuner circuitry to cause the tuner circuitry to tune to the selected television  
7 frequency.

8 As a result, a manufacturer can make one television product, which can be  
9 shipped anywhere in the world. Once arriving at a particular country, the  
10 television product can be configured to the standards and frequencies of that  
11 country either automatically, or via a simple user interface.

## 12 13 **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

14 Fig. 1 is a block diagram of a prior art television tuner.

15 Fig. 2 is a diagrammatic illustration of a broadcast television system.

16 Fig. 3 is a block diagram of a broadcast-enabled viewer unit configured for  
17 TV reception.

18 Fig. 4 is a block diagram of a worldwide tuning system implemented in the  
19 viewer unit of Fig. 3.

20 Fig. 5 is a diagrammatic illustration of a country code table and multiple  
21 channel-to-frequency mapping tables, and the indexing between the tables.

22 Fig. 6 is a flow diagram showing steps in a method for configuring the  
23 worldwide tuning system of Fig. 4.

24 Fig. 7 is a flow diagram showing steps in a method for changing channels  
25 using the worldwide tuning system of Fig. 4.

1  
2 **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE APPENDIX**

3 An attached appendix forms part of this document. The appendix contains  
4 a description of methods implemented in a tuner API (application program  
5 interface) utilized by the worldwide tuning system.  
6

7 **DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

8 This invention concerns a worldwide tuning system that is configurable to  
9 different broadcast television standards and channel frequencies used by various  
10 countries according to the countries' ITU long-distance country code. The  
11 worldwide tuning system may be implemented in televisions, computing devices,  
12 or other television broadcast receiving units. One example context for  
13 implementing the worldwide tuning system is described below.

14 **Broadcast System**

15 Fig. 2 shows a broadcast system 50 having a broadcast transmitter 52 that  
16 broadcasts video and audio signals over a broadcast medium 54 to broadcast-  
17 enabled viewer units 56(a)-56(d). The broadcast medium 54 is representative of  
18 different types of distribution technologies, such as satellite, RF, cable, and the  
19 Internet. The broadcast transmitter 52 is representative of different technologies  
20 that are appropriate for the distribution medium, such as a satellite transmitter, RF  
21 transmitter, microwave transmitter, cable head end, and video server.

22 Three different broadcast-enabled viewer units are shown in Fig. 2. Viewer  
23 unit 56(a) is a wireless television that receives broadcast signals over a wireless  
24 medium, such as satellite or RF networks. Viewer unit 56(b) is a cable-enabled  
25 television having a set-top box 58 for receiving video broadcast over a cable



1 network. Viewer unit 56(c) is a broadcast-enabled personal computer (PC) that is  
2 capable of receiving a broadcast video stream from the broadcast medium (e.g.,  
3 satellite, Internet, cable, etc.) and playing the video on a computer monitor or  
4 other display device. One example implementation of a broadcast-enabled PC is  
5 described in a co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/503,055, entitled  
6 "Broadcast-Enabled Personal Computer," filed January 29, 1996 in the names of  
7 Gabe L. Newell, Dan Newell, Steven J. Fluegel, David S. Byrne, Whitney  
8 McCleary, James O. Robarts, Brian K. Moran; William B. McCormick, T.K.  
9 Backman, Kenneth J. Birdwell, Joseph S. Robinson, Alonzo Gariepy, Marc W.  
10 Whitman, and Larry Brader. This application is assigned to Microsoft  
11 Corporation, and is incorporated herein by reference. Viewer unit 56(d) is a  
12 portable computer that is equipped with a broadcast tuner to receive broadcast  
13 signals.

14 Each viewer unit 56 is equipped with a worldwide tuning system that tunes  
15 to a particular broadcast frequency to receive video and audio signals and  
16 processes the signals according to a particular broadcast standard for output to a  
17 display and sound subsystem. The worldwide tuning system flexibly adapts to  
18 various broadcast standards and broadcast frequencies of different countries  
19 around the world. As a result, a manufacturer can produce just one version of a  
20 viewer unit that can be used anywhere in the world. Once the viewer unit resides  
21 in a particular country, the worldwide tuning system unit can be configured to the  
22 standards and frequencies of that county.

23 Fig. 3 shows an exemplary implementation of a viewer unit 56. It includes  
24 a broadcast receiver 60 (e.g., RF antenna, satellite dish, cable box, network card,  
25 etc.), a central processing unit 62, tuner/decoder circuitry 64, an input device 66

1 (e.g., keyboard, mouse, remote control, etc.), a display 68 (e.g., television, VGA  
2 monitor, etc.), and a sound subsystem 70. These components are coupled via a  
3 bus structure 72 that includes, for example, parallel and serial communications  
4 interfaces. The tuner/decoder circuitry 64 tunes the broadcast receiver 60 to the  
5 appropriate frequency and decodes incoming analog signals. It is noted that the  
6 tuner/decoder circuitry 64 may be implemented as a chipset within the central  
7 processing unit 62.

8 The central processing unit 62 has a processor 74 and memory 76 (e.g.,  
9 RAM, ROM, Flash, disk drive, floppy disk drive, CD-ROM, etc.). An operating  
10 system 78 is stored in memory 76 and executed on processor 74 when the viewer  
11 unit is turned on. The operating system 78 is preferably a multitasking operating  
12 system that allows simultaneous execution of multiple applications. One preferred  
13 operating system is a Windows brand operating system sold by Microsoft  
14 Corporation, such as Windows CE, or Windows 95, or Windows NT or other  
15 derivative versions of Windows.

16 The viewer unit 56 runs a multimedia application 80 that provides  
17 processing support of the streaming video and analog signals received over the  
18 broadcast receiver. The multimedia application 80 is stored in memory 74 and  
19 executed on the processor 72. In the illustrated implementation, the multimedia  
20 application 80 is implemented using a technology known as Microsoft  
21 DirectShow, which provides playback multimedia streams from local files or  
22 Internet servers, and capture of multimedia streams from devices.

23 The multimedia application includes a modular arrangement of pluggable  
24 components known as "filters" which are connected together at interface points  
25 known as "pins" (referenced generally as number 82 in Fig. 3). A filter is a COM

(component object model) object that performs a specific task on a data stream, such as decompressing video data. For each stream, the filter exposes at least one pin. A pin is a COM object created by the filter that represents a point of connection for a unidirectional data stream on the filter. Input pins accept data into the filter, and output pins provide data to other filters. A typical transform filter has one input pin and one output pin. A source filter has one output pin for each data stream and a destination filter has one input pin. More complex filter arrangements are also possible.

Filters are arranged in a configuration called a "filter graph". During construction, a developer uses a component called the "filter graph manager" to connect the filters and control the stream's data flow.

Here, the filters 82 of the multimedia application 80 are configured to control underlying hardware elements in the tuner/decoder circuitry 64 associated with reception and playback of a broadcast signal. The multimedia application 80 also has a layer of drivers 84 that interface the filters 82 with the tuner/decoder circuitry 64.

### **Worldwide Tuning System**

Fig. 4 shows a hardware/software architecture of a worldwide tuning system 100. The architecture has three layers: a software layer of filters 82, a software layer of drivers 84, and a hardware layer comprising the tuner/decoder circuitry 64. The tuner/decoder circuitry 64 has a tuner 102 that receives an analog broadcast signal at a particular broadcast frequency. The tuner is capable of tuning to a wide range of frequencies allotted to different countries.

The tuner 102 separates the broadcast signal into two analog data signals: a video signal and an audio signal. The audio and video signals are routed through

1 crossbar 104 to an audio decoder 106 and a video decoder 108, respectively. In  
2 this implementation, the audio decoder 106 converts the analog signal to digital  
3 audio data, which is passed to the sound subsystem 70 for further processing to  
4 provide such qualities as surround sound. In another implementation, the audio  
5 decoder passes the analog signal through without digitizing it. In this case, the  
6 audio decoder is used to control other parameters, such as volume.

7 The video decoder 108 converts the analog video signal to digital video  
8 data. The video decoder 108 is preferably a multistandard analog decoder that is  
9 capable of decoding video signals using one of a variety of video standards. The  
10 digital video data is stored in the memory 76 of the central processing unit 62 (Fig.  
11 3), which is accessible by the filters 82 for processing the video data prior to  
12 display.

13 The worldwide tuning system 100 implements a filter graph 82 that  
14 programs the hardware tuner/decoder circuitry 64 to the appropriate frequencies  
15 and standards used in various countries of the world. The filter graph 82 includes  
16 a tuner filter 110, a crossbar filter 112, an audio filter 114, and a video decoder  
17 filter 116. These filters correspond to respective hardware components in the  
18 tuner/decoder circuitry 64, and namely the tuner 102, crossbar 104, audio decoder  
19 106, and video decoder 108. Other filters in graph 82 include an overlay mixer  
20 filter 118, a video renderer filter 120, a tee filter 122, a closed captioning (CC)  
21 filter 124, an electronic programming guide (EPG) filter 126, and a broadcast data  
22 filter 128. The VBI filters are proxies for underlying kernel level software drivers:  
23 CC driver 125, EPG driver 127, and BC data driver 129. Although three VBI  
24 filters are shown in Fig. 4 for discussion purposes, other VBI filters can be used in  
25

1 addition to, or in place of, the ones shown. A "line 21" decoder filter 131 is also  
2 provided in the filter graph 82.

3 Each filter has at least one input pin (represented by a box with a ">" sign  
4 inside on the left side of a filter) or at least one output pin (represented by a box  
5 with a ">" sign inside on the right side of a filter). Several filters have both an  
6 input pin and an output pin, and some filters have multiple input and/or output  
7 pins. Data flows from the tuner filter 110 through the various filters as indicated  
8 by the arrows connecting output pins of preceding filters to input pins of the next  
9 filters.

10 The drivers 84 provide an interface between the filters 82 and  
11 corresponding hardware components 64. The tuner filter 110 controls the tuning  
12 frequency of the tuner 102 via a tuner driver 130. The crossbar filter 112 submits  
13 routing instructions to the crossbar 104 via a crossbar driver 132. The audio filter  
14 114 uses an audio driver 134 to control the audio decoder 106, and the video  
15 decoder filter 116 employs a video decoder driver 136 to manage the video  
16 decoder 108. The video renderer filter 120 provides display data to a display  
17 driver 138, which in turn provides pixel data to the display 68. A tee driver 123 is  
18 a kernel level instantiation of the tee filter 122. As noted above, the CC driver  
19 125, EPG driver 127, and BC data driver 129 correspond to, and facilitate data  
20 flow for, the CC filter 124, the EPG filter 126, and BC data filter 128, respectively.

21 The worldwide tuning system 100 is configurable to different broadcast  
22 standards and broadcast frequencies based on ITU long-distance country codes.  
23 An ITU long-distance country code is the international calling code assigned by  
24 the International Telecommunications Union to facilitate international telephone  
25 calls. The ITU code is the number that precedes the area code in an international

1 telephone call. The ITU code for the United States is "01" or just "1". The ITU  
2 codes uniquely identify the countries in the world.

3 The tuner filter 110 has an ITU country code table 140 that lists all of the  
4 participating countries or territories in the world according to their ITU codes.  
5 The tuner filter 110 also maintains multiple international channel-to-frequency  
6 mapping tables 142 that provide broadcast standards and correlate channels and  
7 broadcast frequencies in individual countries. There might be one channel-to-  
8 frequency table for each country, or it may be possible for two or more countries  
9 to share the same channel-to-frequency conversion. It is further noted that one  
10 country might have more than one table in the event that separate regions within  
11 the country require a different broadcast standard or different channel-to-  
12 frequency mappings.

13 The worldwide tuning system 100 exposes an application program interface  
14 144 (discussed below and in the Appendix) that can be used during configuration  
15 to select the correct country. The API enables applications to set video standards,  
16 set TV channels, and to get or set information about the channel frequencies. A  
17 configuration application allows a user to enter the correct country by typing in or  
18 selecting a country name, or abbreviation, via a user interface. The configuration  
19 application can convert the user-entered country to a corresponding country code  
20 and then call an API function to pass in country code to the worldwide tuning  
21 system. Once the country code is input, the worldwide tuning system 100  
22 automatically adjusts to the appropriate broadcast standards and group of  
23 broadcast frequencies for the country.

24 Fig. 5 shows the relationship between the country code table 140 and  
25 various channel-to-frequency tables 142. The country code table 140 lists the

1 countries by their ITU long-distance codes. The country code table 140 also  
2 correlates broadcast standards with particular countries. In this illustration, the  
3 country code table 140 lists the United State, which has an ITU code of 1 and  
4 employs the NTSC standard, and France, which has an ITU code of 33 and utilizes  
5 the SECAM/L standard.

6 The ITU country code table 140 contains indexes to corresponding channel-  
7 to-frequency tables 142. In Fig. 5, the table entries for USA and France index to  
8 corresponding channel-to-frequency tables 142(1) and 142(33). The channel-to-  
9 frequency tables 142 in turn map channels in the countries to appropriate cable  
10 and broadcast frequencies for those countries. The channel-to-frequency tables  
11 142 also contain the appropriate video standards for the countries. The France  
12 channel-to-frequency table 142(33), for example, correlates channel numbers 2, 3,  
13 4, ..., J with associated cable and broadcast frequencies, and identifies the  
14 SECAM/L standard.

15 Fig. 6 shows steps in a method for automatically configuring the worldwide  
16 tuning system 100 to a particular video standard and set of frequencies. At step  
17 150, the tuner filter 110 receives a particular country or ITU country code via API  
18 144. More specifically, an application uses the method  
19 "IAMTVTUNER::put\_CountryCode" to select a country. The tuner filter 110 uses  
20 the country or ITU country code to perform a lookup operation in the country code  
21 table 140 (step 152 in Fig. 6). The referenced table entry is then used to index the  
22 appropriate channel-to-frequency table 142 (step 154). The tuner filter 110 loads  
23 and stores the indexed channel-to-frequency table 142 for subsequent tuning  
24 operations (step 156). A method "IAMTVTUNER::put\_TuningSpace" sets the  
25

1 locale specific ID and a method "IAMTVTUNER::StoreAutoTune" saves all  
2 locale specific optimal tuning frequencies for later recall.

3       Locale specific tuning is an advantageous feature of this worldwide tuning  
4 system. It is particularly useful for portable situations. For instance, suppose a  
5 user is located in Seattle, Washington, USA. The user might configure the  
6 worldwide tuning system to the Seattle locale using "IAMTVTUNER::  
7 put\_TuningSpace". All channels in Seattle are scanned for optimal tuning  
8 frequencies and are then stored via "IAMTVTUNER::StoreAutoTune" as a file or  
9 other data record.

10       Now, suppose the user travels to Paris, France, taking along a portable  
11 viewer unit. The user can then reconfigure the worldwide tuning system to the  
12 Paris locale using "IAMTVTUNER:: put\_TuningSpace". All channels in Paris are  
13 scanned for optimal tuning frequencies and are then stored in a second file via  
14 "IAMTVTUNER::StoreAutoTune".

15       When the user returns to Seattle with the portable viewer unit, the  
16 worldwide tuning system can simply retrieve the file with optimal frequencies for  
17 that locale. The worldwide tuning system is immediately restored for operation in  
18 Seattle, without reconfiguration and rescanning. As a result, the portable viewer  
19 unit is immediately available for TV viewing in Seattle. Similarly, the user could  
20 return to Paris and retrieve the stored frequency file for that locale, as well.

21       Once a mapping table 142 for a particular country is loaded, the worldwide  
22 tuning system 100 tunes to particular frequencies upon selection of various  
23 channels. At step 158, the tuner filter 110 receives a particular channel via API  
24 144. The method "IAMTVTUNER::put\_Channel" is called to input the channel  
25 number. The tuner filter 110 uses the channel to lookup the corresponding



frequency in the channel-to-frequency table 142 (step 160 in Fig. 6). The tuner filter 110 passes the frequency to the tuner driver 130, which tunes the hardware tuner 102 (step 162). The tuner driver 130 responds with information regarding the quality of the signal received at that frequency (step 164). If the quality is not optimal, the tuner filter 110 uses a search algorithm to scan for the best possible signal within the channel (step 166 in Fig. 6). The method “IAMTVTUNER::AutoTune” is called to scan for a precise signal on the channel’s frequency.

### **Filter Graph Data Flow Architecture**

With continuing reference to Fig. 4, the tuner filter 110 communicates tuning changes to the other filters synchronously while providing the control instructions to the underlying tuner driver 130 and tuner 102. At the beginning and end of each tuning operation, the tuner filter 110 sends a packet 170 downstream to all filters connected in the graph 82. The packet 170 contains information regarding the tuning operation in progress. The packet 170 includes the country code, the channel being tuned, the video standard, and flags indicating whether this is the beginning or end of the tuning operation. As an example, the packet 170 can be implemented as a data structure KS\_TVTUNER\_CHANGE\_INFO, as follows:

```
typedef struct tagKS_TVTUNER_CHANGE_INFO {
    DWORD    dwFlags;                //DS_TVTUNER_CHANGE_*
    DWORD    dwCountryCode;         //ITU Country Code
    DWORD    dwAnalogVideoStandard; //Current Analog Video Standard
    DWORD    dwChannel;             //Channel Number
} KS_TVTUNER_CHANGE_INFO, *PKS_TVTUNER_CHANGE_INFO;

dwFlags:
    KS_TVTUNER_CHANGE_BEGIN_TUNE    Tuning operation is beginning
```

1  
2 The crossbar filter 112 routes the packet to the video decoder filter 116 and  
3 audio filter 114. Even though the packet may not contain any audio instructions,  
4 the packet notifies the audio filter 114 when a tuning operation is beginning and  
5 ending. In response, the audio filter mutes the audio output between the time it  
6 receives a beginning packet and an ending packet to prevent output of noise or a  
7 distorted sound.

8 The video decoder filter 116 passes the packet 170 on to tee filter 122 and  
9 overlay mixer filter 118. The tee filter 122 replicates the packet and supplies it to  
10 the closed captioning filter 124, the EPG filter 126, and the broadcast data filter  
11 128. These filters 124-128 detect whether the packet 170 is for beginning or  
12 ending a tuning operation. During the tuning transition, these filter 124-128 cease  
13 decoding the data because the data might become corrupted in the interim. The  
14 overlay mixer filter 118 passes the packet onto the video renderer filter 120.

15 The video decoder filter 116 extracts the video standard from the packet  
16 170 to determine which standard is being used in the video data stream. This  
17 information, in turn, determines which VBI (vertical blanking interval) lines to  
18 decode. The video decoder filter 116 includes a VBI component 172 and a video  
19 capture component 174. Depending on the video standard, the VBI component  
20 172 decodes certain lines of data contained in the digital video data output by the  
21 video decoder 108. This VBI data is passed to the tee filter 122, where it is sent  
22 for processing to the closed captioning filter 124, the EPG filter 126, and the  
23 broadcast data filter 128. The tee filter 122 does not replicate the data; rather, the  
24 data is treated as being read-only and a single copy is simultaneously passed to  
25 each of the VBI decoders.

1 The VBI data might include closed captioning information for the closed  
2 captioning filter 124, data used by the EPG filter 126 to create or update an  
3 electronic programming guide, or other data collected by the data filter 128 to  
4 provide stock quotes, weather, news, and so forth. As noted above, many other  
5 types of VBI codecs may be used to decode many different type of data embedded  
6 in the VBI portion of the television signal. The closed captioning filter 124  
7 outputs data to a "line 21" decoder filter 131, which decodes the CC data. The  
8 decoder filter 131 passes the closed captioning data on to the overlay mixer filter  
9 118, where it is combined with the video data.

10 The video capture component 174 decodes the digital video data from the  
11 video decoder 108 according to the video standard contained in the packet 170.  
12 Additionally, the video capture component 174 might further process or enhance  
13 the video data stream.

14 The video decoder filter 116 outputs the video data to the overlay mixer  
15 filter 118 where it is combined with the closed captioning data. The overlay mixer  
16 filter processes the video data and outputs the stream to the video renderer filter  
17 120 for rendering. The video renderer filter 120 outputs the video data stream to  
18 the display driver 138, which drives the display 66.

19 To illustrate data flow through the worldwide tuning system 100, Fig. 7  
20 shows steps in a method for changing channels. At step 180, the tuner filter 110  
21 receives a new channel via API 144 (i.e., IAMTVTUNER::put\_Channel). The  
22 tuner filter 110 uses the channel to lookup a corresponding broadcast or cable  
23 frequency in the channel-to-frequency table 142 (step 182 in Fig. 7). The tuner  
24 filter 110 generates a beginning packet that contains the country code, the new  
25 channel, the video standard, and a flag indicating the start of the tuning operation

1 (step 184). The tuner filter 110 passes the beginning packet to the downstream  
2 filters to inform them of the impending tuning operation (step 186). In response,  
3 some downstream filters (e.g., audio filter 114, closed captioning filter 124, EPG  
4 filter 126, data filter 128) cease processing the current data stream to avoid  
5 processing corrupt or incomplete data.

6 At step 188 in Fig. 7, the tuner filter 110 outputs the new frequency to the  
7 tuner driver 130, which tunes the tuner 102 to the new channel. Fine adjustment  
8 may then be performed as described above with respect to steps 164 and 166 in  
9 Fig. 6.

10 After the tuner 102 is tuned to the new channel, the tuner filter 110  
11 generates an ending packet that contains the country code, the new channel, the  
12 video standard, and a flag indicating the end of the tuning operation (step 190). In  
13 response, the downstream filters begin processing the data stream.

#### 14 **Tuner API**

15 The tuner filter 110 implements an API that enables applications to set  
16 video standards, set TV channels, and to get or set information about the channel  
17 frequencies. This interface can also determine what analog video standards your  
18 TV supports. Generally, the API includes methods for performing the following  
19 functions:

- 20 1. Retrieve pointers to supported interfaces
- 21 2. Increment reference count of tuner filter object
- 22 3. Decrement reference count of tuner filter object
- 23 4. Retrieve all analog video TV standards supported by the tuner
- 24 5. Retrieve the current analog video TV standard in use
- 25 6. Set the TV channel

- 1 7. Retrieve current TV channel
- 2 8. Retrieve the highest and lowest channels available
- 3 9. Scan for a precise signal on the channel's frequency
- 4 10. Set the country code to establish the frequency set
- 5 11. Retrieve the country code
- 6 12. Set a storage index for regional channel to frequency mappings
- 7 13. Retrieve the storage index for regional fine tuning
- 8 14. Retrieve the number of TV sources plugged into the tuner filter
- 9 15. Set the tuner input type (cable or antenna)
- 10 16. Retrieve the tuner input type (cable or antenna)
- 11 17. Set the hardware tuner input connection
- 12 18. Retrieve the hardware tuner input connection
- 13 19. Retrieve the current video frequency
- 14 20. Retrieve the current audio frequency

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16 A detailed list of the methods in the tuner API is provided in the Appendix  
17 to this disclosure. This Appendix is incorporated into the disclosure.

### 18 **Upgrading Worldwide Tuner**

19 Video standards employed within a country may change from time to time  
20 for various reasons. For instance, governments might reallocate broadcast  
21 frequencies or adopt a different video standard for political, administrative, or  
22 technical reasons, or countries may be created or cease to exist. Due to these  
23 changes, the channel-to-frequency mapping tables within the tuner filter 110 may  
24 output erroneous frequency values or erroneous video standards.

1 In one implementation, the filters 82 are configured as dynamic linked  
2 libraries (DLLs). Any one filter may be replaced dynamically without restarting  
3 the system. For instance, in the event that certain broadcast frequencies have  
4 changed, a manufacturer or other provider can provide a new tuner filter DLL with  
5 updated channel-to-frequency tables that reflect the new broadcast frequencies.  
6 This tuner filter DLL can replace the existing, out-of-date tuner filter.

7 The new filter DLLs may be downloaded using several different means. As  
8 examples, the filter DLLs might be downloaded over the Internet, or broadcast as  
9 VBI data, or distributed on disk.

10 The worldwide tuning system is advantageous over prior art tuning  
11 systems. The tuning system enables worldwide tuning based on ITU country  
12 code, allowing it to be configured in the field rather than at the factory.  
13 Additionally, if standards or channel frequencies change, the tuning system can be  
14 reconfigured.

15 Another benefit is that the worldwide tuning system is portable. The  
16 worldwide tuning system can be implemented in portable computers and  
17 reconfigured to receive different television broadcasts as the user travels to  
18 different countries.

19 Another benefit is that the worldwide tuning system can be implemented as  
20 replaceable DLLs that are accessed via a set of APIs. As changes are made to  
21 broadcast television standards and channel frequencies, new DLLs can be  
22 downloaded and used to replace out-of-date DLLs without affecting operation of  
23 the system.

24 Although the invention has been described in language specific to structural  
25 features and/or methodological steps, it is to be understood that the invention

1 defined in the appended claims is not necessarily limited to the specific features or  
2 steps described. Rather, the specific features and steps are disclosed as preferred  
3 forms of implementing the claimed invention.

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